



SUBMITTED PHOTO

150TH COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

Heather Fuller and her brother, Bryan, had never been apart for more than a week before Bryan's Army National Guard unit was activated for duty in Iraq. Heather's advice for people with loved ones serving overseas: "Take it one day at a time. If you just go on as normal as you can, you will be fine."

Twins separated by half a world

Lee Johnson is a history major at East Mississippi Community College in Scooba, where he is a member of the Lion's Pride Marching Band. He is an associate minister at Lower Prairie Creek Missionary Baptist Church — and says he enjoys being around "positive people." He hopes one day to be a teacher.

His story is about two of his classmates, Spc. Bryan Fuller of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion, Company A, and his twin sister, Heather.

By Lee Johnson

special to The Star

It's always hard to watch a family member leave for active duty, but it's especially hard when your loved one is a twin.

Louisville native Heather Fuller has had to adjust to being without her twin brother, Bryan.

"It was hard to accept the fact that Bryan was leaving because we have never been apart for longer than a week," Heather said. "We've been together since before birth — same house, same grade, same school, we even shared a vehicle."

Heather and Bryan both received band scholarships this past fall to East Mississippi Community College.

"When I came here from high school, I didn't know anybody, but that was OK because I was going to be with my brother. Then all of a sudden he got orders," Heather said.

"It's a growing experience because I'm having to deal with my own stuff. He's the older twin, so it is easy for me to rely on him,

and now I have to rely on myself."

Bryan signed up with the Army National Guard in Union while he was still in high school. He was called to active duty in April and later sent to Camp Shelby for training.

Fuller couldn't communicate with her brother much while he was in training, but she did get brief phone calls and visits every now and then.

"While he was at Camp Shelby, we could talk to him three or four times a week because they could take cell phones there," she said. "Our birthday was Nov. 29, and I didn't get to talk to him on our birthday."

The twins took JROTC in high school, where Bryan's interest in the military grew. Heather said Bryan earned the highest rank possible, lieutenant colonel. There was lots of sibling rivalry growing up, especially when it came to band. Heather, a flute player, and Bryan a trumpet player, would try to get the higher chair.

"We used to argue about the stupidest stuff, like the TV remote. We'd compare grade point averages," she said. "The older you get, the more respect you have for each other. I'd give anything to see him now."

Fuller has advice for those who have family members going to Iraq: "Take it one day at a time. If you just go on as normal as you can, you will be fine."

Brian visited home in late December, and then left for Iraq, serving as a combat engineer. He is expected to be in Iraq for 13 months. When he returns, Fuller said, "We will be one and we are going to have a big celebration."

"It makes me proud to know that I am related to Bryan. I know that he did this of his own free will."